Examiner Chronicles Vol. I

The Music Makers

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DEDICATION

To Rowley

"If music be the food of love, play on."

– William Shakespeare

Classic Rock

What it's all about

Is there a tried and true definition of the term? Frustratingly, no.

The dictionary defines **"Classic"** as **"serving as a standard of excellence : of recognized value"** Sounds pretty good: "Classic Rock" is rock music that serves as a standard of excellence. Okay, but does that mean just *any* rock music? Nope.

"Classic Rock" once meant music from the decade of the 1970s. But now covers music from the 1950s through the 1980s. Age isn't the only thing that makes rock music a classic. Who recorded it, how much airplay did it get at the

time it came out, and is it still somewhat popular today? These are some of the questions that are asked when defining Classic Rock.

If the musician or band that recorded the song is relatively unknown, it's not likely the song would be considered a classic. But there are exceptions. Though he had a good career in the early seventies, Andy Kim is known to most fans of classic rock for only one song: "Rock Me Gently," which is indeed considered a classic.

How often it was played when it first came out is important, too. But if the song dropped off the charts – and playlists – only a few months after it was released and was rarely heard again, it wouldn't be considered a classic.

What it comes down to, is the fans determine what is and isn't Classic Rock. What songs do they want to listen to? Have they heard these songs over and over again and not grown tired of them? Are the songs still as relevant today as they were when they were first released?

The articles in this little book are not meant to cover the entire world of classic rock, but to give you just a sampling.

While Classic Rock is hard to define, one thing is for sure: you'll know it when you hear it.

The Rolling Stones

It's only rock'n'roll

The Rolling Stones have been making music for over fifty years, and not even Mick Jagger's heart surgery (in 2019) could slow them down. Love or hate them, one thing must be agreed upon: After fifty years, the Stones seem unstoppable.

Right from the outset, Mick Jagger realized the band was doing something right. "...I was 18 or so. The Rolling Stones were just starting to play some clubs around London, and I realized I was getting a lot of girl action when normally I hadn't gotten much. ...You realize that these girls

are going, either quietly or loudly, sort of crazy. And you're going, 'Well, this is good. You know, this is something else.' At that age you're just so impressed, especially if you've been rather shy before. There's two parts of all this, at least. There's this great fascination for music and this love of playing blues – not only blues, just rock & roll generally. There's this great love of that."

The group was formed in London in 1962. It consisted of Brian Jones on guitar and harmonica, Ian Stewart on piano, Mick Jagger on lead vocals, harmonica, and maracas, Keith Richards on guitar, and vocals, bassist Bill Wyman and Charlie Watts on drums.

Founding member Brian Jones was very influential in the band's early years. Beyond the guitar and harmonica, he played other instruments, including the sitar. Slowly, though, the center of the band shifted from Jones to Jagger and Richards as the latter two became a solid songwriting team. Developing a serious drug and alcohol problem, Jones left the Stones after seven years. A month later, he was found dead in a swimming pool at his home. Former bassist, Bill Wyman (who retired in 1993), spoke about Jones' influence. "[H]e formed the band. He chose the members. He named the band. He chose the music we played. He got us gigs… Very influential, very important, and then slowly lost it – highly intelligent – and just kind of wasted it and blew it all away."

Though Brian Jones was gone, the band continued on. Despite – or maybe because of – various brushes with the law, the success of The Rolling Stones continued to grow. They became known as "the bad boys of rock & roll." "The Beatles got the white hat so what was left? The black hat," Keith Richards once said.

Like any good, solid musical career, it wasn't all hits with The Rolling Stones. Mingled in among the good records were a few weaker ones. "[E]veryone was using drugs, Keith particularly. So I think [the records] suffered a bit from all that." Mick Jagger once told interviewer Jann S. Wenner. "General malaise. I think we got a bit carried away with our own popularity and so on." But that never deterred the band, which always came back with big hits after the release of mediocre ones.

The Rolling Stones have released over twenty albums and appeared on television and in movies. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inducted the Rolling Stones in 1989, noting that "critical acclaim and popular consensus has accorded them the title of the 'World's Greatest Rock and Roll Band'." The band was ranked 4th on *Rolling Stone* magazine's "100 Greatest Artists of All Time" list, and lists the Stones' album sales as estimated to have been more than 200 million worldwide.

Not bad for a group of bad boys.

J. Geils Band

Nothing but a party

Long before the single "Centerfold" went to #1 on the US Billboard Hot 100 and gained them worldwide attention, The J. Geils Band was wowing audiences with their brand of Blues-driven style of classic rock. Originally named "The J. Geils Blues band", the group consisted of John Geils (guitar), Danny Klein (bass), and Richard "Magic Dick" Salwitz (harmonica). "The three of us were studying to be

engineers and scientists at Worchester Polytechnic Institute, which was a small college," Salwitz said in an interview from 2009. "We got so into the music thing that we neglected our studies, and after a year and a half we split school and moved to Boston."

About a year after the move, the group added two more members: frontman and ex-DJ Peter Wolf, and drummer Stephen Jo Bladd. It was then that they dropped the "Blues" from the band name and started to build up a local following. Last to join the group was keyboardist Seth Justman. Soon after, the group signed with Atlantic Records and released their first album – simply titled *The J. Geils Band* – in 1971.

That album – and the ones that followed – featured blistering originals as well as Jazz and Blues classics by the likes of Otis Rush and John Lee Hooker. The band's live recordings (*"Live" Full House*, *Blow Your Face Out*, and *Showtime!*) are fast-paced, hard-driving party albums. This can be attributed in part to fast-talking, jive-talking lead vocalist Peter Wolf. "Peter Wolf was a master at working the crowd," musician Tom Petty said in a 2009 Rolling Stone interview. "He knew how to get the place really rockin'. I learned a great deal watching him..."

In the early 1980s – with the release of album #12, *Freeze Frame* - the band's sound changed slightly. While still blues-driven, a touch of pop had slipped into their music. Author Stephen Thomas Erlewine noted the change in the book "All Music Guide to Rock": "...the makeover paid off with the massive hit single 'Centerfold', which stayed at number one for six weeks." The band's new-found commercial success was bittersweet; in 1983, Peter Wolf left the band over creative differences. The follow-up to Freeze Frame – 1984's

You're Getting Even While I'm Getting Odd - flopped, and the group disbanded.

In 1999, the original members (including Wolf but not Stephen Jo Bladd) reunited for The Great American Houseparty Tour. Since then, they have gotten together several times, most notably in August, 2010, when they rocked Fenway Park alongside another Boston-born band, Aerosmith. "If it's rock and roll, we've got it," Peter Wolf said after announcing the show at a Red Sox game.

The group continued to tour through 2013 – without J. Geils. In 2012, Wolf, Justman, Klein, and Salwitz went on tour without the band's co-founder; John Geils then filed a lawsuit against them. "They do not have the right to take his name and use it," said Geils' lawyer, Charles Grimes. The lawsuit was ultimately unsuccessful. Geils left the band permanently; sadly, he passed away in 2017.

James Taylor

Sing me a song

When an album is certified "Diamond" by the Recording Industry Association of America, it's a good bet that album is pretty popular. James Taylor's *Greatest Hits* – released in 1976 – never climbed higher than #23 on the ***Billboard* 200**, but has sold over 12 million copies in the US. The popularity of the album reflects Taylor's huge success as a singer. "I believe 100 percent in the power and importance of music," he once said.

James Taylor was born in Massachusetts but spent most of his childhood in rural North Carolina. "I feel as though my coming of age was more a matter of landscape and climate than people," he told Timothy White in 1997. "There was nobody around!" After learning to play the cello, he turned to the guitar. "It's served me well," James said in an interview with Billy Bragg. "I'm a finger picker." That finger-picking technique evolved as he listened to and played hymns and carols as he grew up.

While attending boarding school back in his home state, James and a friend of his began playing at local coffeehouses. After returning to North Carolina for a bit, he went back to Massachusetts to finish school. Gradually, depression set in, and James voluntarily checked himself into an institution, McLean Hospital. He felt as if he was part of a "life that I [was] unable to lead," he told White. James did graduate, getting a diploma from one of the schools associated with McLean. Soon after a move to New York, James became addicted to heroin. "I learned a lot about music and too much about drugs," he said in 1981. His father took him back to North Carolina, where James spent six months recuperating.

Surprisingly, James Taylor embarked on his professional musical career in London, England. It was there that he recorded some demos that caught the attention of several people at Apple Records – one of them being Paul McCartney. "I just heard his voice and his guitar and I thought he was great ..." he says in Timothy White's James Taylor biography *Long Ago and Far Away*. "...and he came and played live, so it was just like, 'Wow, he's *great*." Amidst another struggle with drugs – and more time in

hospitals – James' debut album – *James Taylor* – was released by Apple Records in late 1968. Commercially, the album did not do well, because James was hospitalized and could not tour to promote it.

One of the songs on the album is "Carolina in My Mind", a beautiful ballad that arose from James' homesickness while staying in England. "When I wrote this, I didn't have a home at the time. But that doesn't mean you can't be homesick," he joked once while introducing the song in concert. "Dark and silent late last night / I think I might have heard the highway calling / Geese in flight and dogs that bite / Signs that might be omens say I'm going, going / I'm goin' to Carolina in my mind."

Then, in February 1970, came James' second album: *Sweet Baby James*. The title track and "Fire and Rain" are two of his most famous songs. The former a lullaby for his nephew; the latter a song about a friend's suicide and James' own personal struggles with depression and addiction. "Won't you look down upon me, Jesus / You've got to help me make a stand / You've just got to see me through another day / My body's aching and my time is at hand / And I won't make it any other way."

James Taylor's career has spanned decades. He has released almost thirty albums, dozens of singles, eight Grammys and many other awards. Perhaps his popularity and longevity as an artist can be attributed to his passion for what he does. "I believe musicians have a duty, a responsibility to reach out, to share your love or pain with others," he once said.

Even a broken leg can't slow the singer down. In March of 2011, James suffered a skiing accident but continued a world-wide tour. Proves you can't keep a good man down.

The Monkees

We're too busy singing

The year 2011 marked the 45th anniversary of the debut of The Monkees – both of the TV show and of the band. Back in 1965, two Hollywood producers – Robert "Bob" Rafelson and Bert Schneider – wanted to make a TV show revolving around a Beatles-type band. In September of '65, two Hollywood newspapers ran an ad. "Folk & Roll Musicians-Singers for acting roles in new TV series." Four out of 400

hopefuls were cast: Micky Dolenz, Davy Jones, Michael Nesmith, and Peter Tork.

The TV show debuted just one year later, and The Monkees were on their way. Often called the "Prefab four," The Monkees had producers and executives deciding *everything* for them – even who would play what instrument on the series. For instance, lead vocalist Davy Jones did fairly well as a novice drummer, but because of his small stature, television cameras had a hard time capturing him behind the drum kit, so Micky Dolenz was chosen to play the drums. The group did, however, sometimes decide what songs they would perform. "We very often did have a say, and we very often did not have a say," Jones explained in a 1986 interview with Gary James. "For example we turned down Neil Sedaka's 'Love Will Keep Us Together' and the song 'Knock Three Times On The Ceiling (If You Want Me)'. I said 'I'm not singing that. You must be joking.'"

Their first single – "Last Train to Clarksville" – was released just about a month before the TV show began its run. Whether or not The Monkees played their own instruments on this and other songs (only Peter Tork contributed to playing instruments on the first two albums) is not worth arguing. "Last Train to Clarksville" was a hit, climbing to the number one spot on the *U.S. Billboard Hot 100* charts. Despite its very upbeat pop sound, the song deals with the solemn subject of a soldier shipping out who wants to spend one last night with his girlfriend. "We'll have one more night together / 'Til the morning brings my train," Micky Dolenz sings. "And I must go / Oh, no, no, no / Oh, no, no, no / And I don't know / If I'm ever coming home."

In October of 1966, "Last Train to Clarksville" was included on The Monkees debut album, which turned out to be the first of four consecutive number one albums released by the group. That first album – *The Monkees* – stayed on the Billboard 200 for 13 weeks. It was followed a few months later by *More of The Monkees*, which contained their second single (and another hit) "Daydream Believer". The third album – *Headquarters*, released in mid-1967 – was the first album all four of the band members actually sang and played instruments on (though Dolenz, Jones and Nesmith had handled vocals from the start.). *Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn & Jones Ltd.* came out in November of 1967. It featured yet another hit single. "Pleasant Valley Sunday" climbed to number 3 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100.

In 1968, the studio and The Monkees could not agree on the future of the television show. "NBC wanted to do a third year," Davy Jones said. "[But] we wanted to change the format. We wanted to present ourselves as individuals and as a group, and as an improvisational group working with other people." So the Emmy award-winning show faded away after two seasons. A full-length feature film followed, but did not do well commercially.

There had been tension between band members for some time. Peter Tork left the group in 1969; Michael Nesmith followed a year later. But Dolenz and Jones continued on, though denied the right to use the name "The Monkees." Thanks to reruns of the show, however, The Monkees have held on to their huge popularity and there have been many reunion concerts over the years, most without Nesmith. In 2011, The Monkees (Dolenz, Jones and Tork) embarked on their 45th Anniversary Tour.

Sadly, in February of 2012, Davy Jones passed away. He was 66.

Nesmith re-joined the band and – along with Micky Dolenz and Peter Tork – the Monkees continued to tour and release albums. Peter Tork died of cancer on February 21, 2019.

Thanks to the television show (which still enjoys syndication), and their many hit songs, the legacy of the Monkees lives on.

The Commodores

Sweet sounds coming down

In 1967, eighteen-year-old guitarist Thomas McClary had a dream: to form a musical group that would be hailed as "the black Beatles". A lofty ambition. But one that began to take shape the day he enrolled at the prestigious Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. It was then that he met another young man: a saxophonist by the name of Lionel Richie. In the following months, they hooked up with William King who played trumpet,. The trio formed the musical group The Mystics.

Keyboardist Milan Williams came on board when another school group disbanded. A new name for The Mystics was needed and during a rehearsal, William King randomly selected the word "commodore" from a dictionary. "We lucked out," King joked when telling this story to *People* magazine. "We almost became The Commodes!"

Over the following months, the group's reputation spread and the Institute sent them to New York to perform in a talent show. One thing led to another, and the Commodores signed a management contract with one Benjamin "Benny" Ashburn, who gave them as much publicity as he could. Ashburn's hard work paid off: in 1969, the group landed an audition with Atlantic Records.

After the audition, two more members were added: Ronald La Pread (bass, trumpet) and Walter Orange (vocals, drums). Soon, the band caught the attention of Motown Records executives, who hired them to be the opening act for the Jackson 5's world tour. The tour was extensive. "...for two years we were the opening act for the Jackson Five," Thomas McClary once told *Onyx Magazine*. "After the two years had expired, we signed with Motown."

Soon after, the Commodores began recording their first album, the funk-heavy *Machine Gun*. Recording began in 1972 and the album debuted on July 22nd, 1974. The title track – an instrumental – was the first single from the album. It peaked at No. 22 on ***Billboard*** **Hot 100**, but went to number 7 on Billboard's **Best Selling Soul Singles** after being released in April of 1974. The second single, "I Feel Sanctified", was also successful, though it didn't climb as high on the charts as its predecessor. "We started touring after our first album," McClary said in the *Onyx* interview,

"and actually broke the Beatles' attendance record in the Philippines, which was unheard of."

It soon became apparent to Motown founder Berry Gordy that he had a massively popular group on his hands. Lionel Richie spoke enthusiastically about his days with the company. "There are great universities for music. Julliard, Berkley, you name it – but nothing like Motown university, you know? If ever you wanted to learn how to be an artist, and have it taught to you by the artists themselves," he said in a 2008 interview with entertainment website "Channel 24" "I had Professor Marvin Gaye, Professor Smokey Robinson, I had the principal of the university, Berry Gordy..."

In 1978, with the release of their sixth studio album – *Natural High* – the Commodores made the crossover from funk to mainstream pop with the ballad "Three Times a Lady", written by Richie. It was the first #1 hit for the Commodores, topping the chart for two weeks. The group has gone on to sell over 75 million records worldwide; they have spawned successful solo careers for former members, most notably Lionel Richie and Thomas McClary. Today, the Commodores continue to perform and record, remaining as popular as ever.

The Carpenters

Closer to you

Over the years, there has been a huge push to get Karen and Richard Carpenter inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Although they have been eligible since 1994, the duo has never been nominated. The Carpenters were the best-selling musical act of the 1970s; today, The **Recording Industry Association of America** (**RIAA**) puts the duo's total record sales at just over 24 million units.

Early on – while still in school – Richard and his younger sister discovered and honed their musical skills: Richard played the piano, and Karen found her talent lay in playing the drums. "All I ever heard was 'girls don't play drums,'"

Karen said once. "That is such an over-used line. But I started anyway. I picked up a pair of sticks, and it was the most natural-feeling thing I've ever done."

In 1965, Richard and Karen formed a jazz trio with Richard's friend and tuba player Wesley Jacobs. The Richard Carpenter Trio won the Hollywood Bowl Battle of the Bands and were signed with RCA Records. They recorded such instrumentals as covers of The Beatles' "Every Little Thing" and Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night". Though only fifteen years old, Karen was already an experienced drummer and it really shows in this early work.

After another – short-lived – band of theirs broke up a few years later, The Carpenters received an offer to appear on the television program *Your All American College Show*. This was to be Richard and Karen's first television exposure. Soon, demo tapes made their way to A&M Record's co-owner Herb Alpert. "When I got the demo tape for the Carpenters, the minute I put it on, I got this feeling," he says in the documentary *Close to You: Remembering the Carpenters*. "When I heard Karen's voice I was just charmed."

Thus began a recording career that would span the next fourteen years. Richard and Karen signed with A&M Records in April of 1969. "After much thought, we decided to name the act 'Carpenters'," Richard says in the album notes for *Carpenters Gold: 35th Anniversary Edition*. "(No 'The'; we thought it sounded hipper without it, like Buffalo Springfield or Jefferson Airplane)." Despite efforts to the contrary, the media tagged their image as "squeaky clean." It certainly didn't hurt the Carpenters' popularity. In 1971 –

just two years after their professional musical career had begun – the Carpenters had won their third Grammy Award.

But behind that clean, wholesome image lurked trouble. Karen Carpenter had been a chubby child and began dieting at the age of seventeen. But after she had reached an ideal weight, the dieting continued. Suffering from low self-esteem, she struggled to maintain control of her weight, and it did not go unnoticed by others. "Anorexia Nervosa was so new that I didn't even know how to pronounce it until 1980," band member John Bettis once said in the biography *Little Girl Blue: The Life of Karen Carpenter* by Randy Schmidt. "From the outside the solution looks so simple. All a person has to do is eat... [Anorexia] just got out of control with her." In 1983, Karen's heart gave out under the stress of constant dieting. She was 32 years old when she died.

Even though Karen was gone, the duo's music continued on. Richard produced several albums of unreleased material, including a Christmas album. More recently, Richard has actively supported the **Richard and Karen Carpenter Performing Arts Center** at his alma mater California State University, Long Beach. He continues to make concert appearances, including fund raising efforts for the Carpenter Center.

Queen

Somebody to Love

Queen was – and still is – an unstoppable powerhouse. The two remaining original band members – guitarist Brian May and drummer Roger Taylor – have toured lately with American singer, songwriter and actor Adam Lambert. Together, they continue to wow audiences around the world. What has become a legendary band began with a smile.

"Smile" was the name of a band formed in 1968 by guitarist Brian May and bassist Tim Staffell; they were soon joined by dental student and drummer Roger Taylor. After a couple years, Staffell left to join another band, and the remaining members were joined by one of their biggest fans and Staffell's friend, Freddie Bulsara. Bulsara changed the name of the band to "Queen". "...I thought up the name 'Queen,'" Freddie later told Don Rush in a 1977 interview. "It's just a name. But it's regal, obviously, and sounds splendid." In 1971, John Deacon joined the band as bassist. The flamboyant Freddie Bulsara soon changed his surname to "Mercury", inspired by a lyric from a song on Queen's debut album.

The self-titled *Queen* was released in 1973, after a long delay. Few record labels were willing to pick it up; songs had to be recorded numerous times because of disagreements. To top it all off, use of the recording studio was severely limited to a handful of hours a day. Despite these setbacks, the album was well-received. "There's no doubt that this funky, energetic English quartet has all the tools they'll need to lay claim to [Led Zeppelin's] abdicated heavy-metal throne, and beyond that to become a truly influential force in the rock world," Gordon Fletcher wrote in *Rolling Stone*. "Their debut album is superb."

Sixteen more albums followed over a 21-year period, producing such hits as "Bohemian Rhapsody", "Another One Bites the Dust", "We Are the Champions" and "We Will Rock You" among others. Queen's July 1985 performance for Live Aid at Wembley Stadium in England was touted as "...the greatest rock performance of all time. It was the perfect stage for Freddie: the whole world," Bob Geldof – organizer of the Live Aid concert – said of Queen's performance.

In the spring of 1987, Freddie Mercury was diagnosed with the AIDS virus. Though he hid this fact from friends and fans, it was evident there was something wrong. Mercury became increasingly gaunt and visibly ill over the next few years. On the 23rd of November, 1991, he issued a statement, part of which reads, "Following the enormous conjecture in the press over the last two weeks, I wish to confirm that I have been tested HIV positive and have AIDS..." Twenty-four hours later, Freddie Mercury died of bronchial pneumonia, a complication of AIDS.

Freddie Mercury was gone, but definitely not forgotten. Although John Deacon has retired, Brian May and Roger Taylor continue to tour with Lambert. "Freddie would love and hate him, because Adam has a real gift from God," May

told Yahoo News in 2018. "It's a voice in a billion, nobody has that range, nobody that I've ever worked with, not just the range but the quality throughout the range. I've seen Adam develop just like I watched Freddie develop."

When talking about Freddie Mercury, Adam Lambert's enthusiasm is hard to miss. "One of the things I love about being on tour with the band is that I get to carry a torch for this hero of mine," Lambert said in a 2019 interview with SirusXM Radio.

A biopic was released in 2018. It is clear, 50 years later, that Queen's legacy will never fade away.

Creedence Clearwater Revival

Keep On Chooglin'

Creedence Clearwater Revival took the stage at Woodstock at three o'clock in the morning; following an overly long jam session by The Grateful Dead. So, when they tore into the first song of the set – "Born on the Bayou" – many in the audience were asleep. John Fogerty and the other band members all agreed CCR's performance in the wee hours of August 16th, 1969 was below par, and they refused to allow footage of the set to be used in the Woodstock movie.

Despite this quiet entry into a world-famous concert, Creedence Clearwater Revival was one of the best-known musical acts of the late sixties and early seventies.

In 1959, rock and roll had been around for about a decade, but was influencing young people everywhere. In San Francisco, a trio of school kids – billed as the Blue Velvets - were hanging around local recording studios, backing up artists from the area. Guitarist John Fogerty, drummer Doug Clifford and Stu Cook on the piano made their first record when they were just fourteen. "[We] were the back-up band on a record by James Powell, a black singer from Richmond, California, on a small label, Christy Records," John Fogerty later recalled. "It was a typical four-chord slow doo-wop song called 'Beverly Angel..'"

John's older brother, Tom, was the lead vocalist for another local band at that time; when Tom's band broke up, he joined the Blue Velvets. Now billed as Tommy Fogerty and the Blue Velvets, they recorded demos and released singles in their pursuit of the rock and roll dream. But Tommy Fogerty and the Blue Velvets were never successful. That is until they signed with San Fransisco-based record label Fantasy. Fantasy changed the group's name to cash in on the British invasion of bands like the Beatles, and released old as well as new material by the former Blue Velvets, now known as the Golliwogs.

The next three years saw some minor changes in the band. John gained more confidence as a singer and took over lead vocal duties while Tom picked up rhythm guitar and backing vocals. Stu Cook moved from piano to electric bass. That wasn't the only change; the music scene was ever-changing and prompted the band to come up with yet another name. A friend of Tom's named Credence; a beer commercial advertising clear water, and the band's determination that this name change would bring about a revival in their music.

Creedence Clearwater Revival went on to release just seven albums in their brief career, but Fogerty's howling vocals and the band's distinct Southern Rock sound gave them many hits, of which "Proud Mary", "Bad Moon Rising" and "Fortunate Son" are just a few.

In 1971, Tom Fogerty left the band. "I got really frustrated at not being able to be everything I wanted to be when I started out," he said later. "I left because of a falling out between John and I about the music itself and how much I could contribute." Tom released several solo albums, but never enjoyed the success of his days with Creedence. The remaining three members released one more album before disbanding in 1972. Tom Fogerty died of an AIDS complication in 1990, due to a tainted blood transfusion.

John Fogerty went on to a successful solo career, gradually relenting and adding CCR material to his live solo shows. In the mid-nineties, Doug Clifford and Stu Cook formed Creedence Clearwater Revisited. "We never really had any intention of playing for the public," Stu Cook explained. "But a friend wanted to promote a couple of concerts. We got talked into it, but didn't know how it would go over." The Revisited band plays CCR hits and is popular the world over.

In 1993, Creedence Clearwater Revival was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

ZZ Top

That little ol' band from Texas

Forty years in the music business and going strong. One way to maintain that longevity is to rest as little as possible. In 2009, ZZ Top averaged 300 dates a year on the road. In 2012, they embarked on their "Gang of Outlaws" tour, along with 3 Doors Down and Gretchen Wilson, which included dates in Russia, Norway, Sweden as well as the U.S.

The band – formed by guitarist Billy Gibbons in 1969 – went through several line-up changes before settling in to the current trio: Billy Gibbons on guitar; Dusty Hill, bass, and Frank Beard on the drums. Gibbons says the name "ZZ Top"

came from two pictures on the wall in his apartment: ZZ Hill (a blues singer) and BB King where King's picture was "on the top."

Soon after the line-up was finalized, ZZ Top recorded and released their first album. The debut – aptly titled *ZZ Top's First Album* – was released in January 1971. The album is fuelled by the blues, boogie, and Southern rock. It cemented their distinctive sound: "a drum, a bass and fuzzy guitar." The album itself failed to show up on the charts, but the sole single, "(Somebody Else Been) Shakin' Your Tree", landed at number 50 on *Billboard Hot 100.*

It wasn't until 1973 and the release of their third album – *Tres Hombres* – that ZZ Top really achieved world-wide fame. *Tres Hombres* was a Top Ten album, securing the Number 8 spot on the *Billboard* Pop Albums chart. The album's only single – the catchy "La Grange", driven by Gibbons' gravelly voice and "fuzzy guitar" – charted at position 41 on *Billboard* Pop Singles. The song is about a brothel on the outskirts of a small town. *Rolling Stone* magazine had this to say about "La Grange": "The genius of this breakthrough was Billy Gibbons' upgrade of a John Lee Hooker boogie riff into blistered metal, and his solo zooms from Texas blacktop to lunar landscapes."

After two more albums and subsequent tours, the group took a two-year-long break. It was during this time that Billy Gibbons and Dusty Hill grew their famous chest-length beards. When they met up after the break, it was clear things were a little different. "I walk into the room, and I'm lookin' at a guy I think I know," Gibbons once said. "My beard has grown to doormat proportions. And I realize that Dusty had done the same thing."

In 1979, the band switched recorder labels, from London Records to Warner Brothers. A year later, they made their

first concert appearance in Europe, performing on the German music show Rockpalast, in support of their sixth album, *Degüello*. That album contained the concert favorite "Cheap Sunglasses". Billy Gibbons recalls how the song came about: "This song was actually written during a trip from the Gulf Coast up to Austin, Texas," he says in an interview with *Guitar World* magazine. "A bright spot of creativity flared as we were passing the hamlet of **La Grange**, and I recited all three verses of 'Cheap Sunglasses' within the space of 20 miles. And that's the way they stayed."

The band's success carried on. Most notably with the release of *Eliminator* in 1983. *Eliminator* produced no less than six hits, including "Gimmie All Your Lovin'" and "Legs". In an interview on the British show *Old Grey Whistle Test* Billy Gibbons reflected on the "Little Ol' Band From Texas" tag. "I think in recent times, we've become more of an *American* band..." ZZ Top was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2004; according to the Recording Industry Association of America, ZZ Top has achieved 4 gold, 3 platinum, and 2 multi-platinum album certifications, in addition to one diamond album.

And they haven't slowed down yet.

Rush

Magic music

The year was 1968. Gary Lee Weinrib and Alex Živojinović met while attending high school in the community of Willowdale in Toronto, Canada. 15-year-old Weinrib was a guitarist interested in playing with a band, and fellow student Živojinović was *in* one. Seems Živojinović's bassist had just left, and Weinrib signed on to replace him. Weinrib changed his name to Geddy Lee and Alex Živojinović became Alex Lifeson, and – along with drummer John Rutsey – they formed the rock "power trio" (guitar, bass and drums) known as Rush.

Rush started out playing in clubs for an average of $30 a gig. Most of their repertoire consisted of covers of Cream tunes. Cream was a hard rock/psychedelic rock band that was a major influence on Rush. "In those days, Cream were my heroes," Geddy Lee once said. According to Bill Banasiewicz in *Rush Visions: The Official Biography* "Rush rehearsed as much as possible. They slowly expanded the number of cover versions they did, and tunes by Jimi Hendrix, The Who, Jeff Beck, The Rolling Stones, Blue Cheer and Elvis joined the original set list of Cream songs."

The band soon cut a single, a cover of a song by Buddy Holly. But it didn't catch on. Because no record company was willing to sign them, the band created their own label, Moon Records, in 1973. A year later, Rush released it's self-titled debut album. But it didn't receive much attention until a Cleveland radio station picked it up. One of the DJs played the track "Working Man" every day, prompting people to call in asking where they could buy the album. Since Rush had no label in the states, Mercury Records quickly signed the band and released *Rush* in the United States.

John Rutsey was not to enjoy the success that his bandmates would soon have. Shortly before Rush's first tour of the US, Rutsey left the band due to health reasons stemming from diabetes. His condition prevented him from extensive touring. "He gave up playing shortly after he left the band and went into bodybuilding," Alex Lifeson said in a 1989 interview. "He competed on an amateur level for a while, doing that for a few years, and has sort of been in and out of that, but he still works out, and I work out with him a few times a week at a local gym – at a Gold's, here in Toronto." Rutsey died in 2008 from complications of diabetes.

Upon Rutsey's departure, Alex and Geddy held auditions for a new drummer. Neil Peart showed up and thought his audition was a disaster. "It was funny because Geddy and I

hit it off right away. ...Alex, for some reason, was in a bad mood that day. So we didn't have much to say to each other," Peart said in 1988. "Playing together, we did what eventually became 'Anthem' (a song on Rush's next album). We jammed around with some of these rhythmic ideas. I thought, 'Oh this is awful'." Despite the awkwardness, he got the job.

In March of 2010, Rush was inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame. Rush's career had by then spanned over forty years, and they weren't done yet. Album #19, *Clockwork Angel* was recorded that year, but not released until 2012.

Then the following year, the band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. "We've been saying for a long time – years – that this wasn't a big deal," Peart said. "Turns out, it kind of is." Though primarily a progressive, hard rock band, elements of blues, reggae and even new wave music have shown up in their extensive discography. Rush was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 1994; the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) lists Rush as having 24 gold records and 14 platinum (3 multi-platinum) records.

In 2018, the band decided not to tour or record anymore. On January 7, 2020, Neil Peart passed away after a 3-year-long battle with brain cancer.

Aerosmith

Welcome to the show!

Steven Tyler was on a path to self-destruction. Everyone around him knew it. His bandmates knew it; his friends and family knew it. Most importantly, *he* knew it. But he was too far gone to help himself. Drugs and alcohol had all but killed him. So, after an agonizing intervention, he went to a rehab clinic to get clean. It was there that he realized just how bad things were. "I'm shuffling down the corridor and I hear people whispering, 'Isn't that Steven Tyler from Aerosmith? Is he ****ed up or what? Jeezus!'" Tyler says in *Walk This*

Way: The Autobiography of Aerosmith. "That was my bottom, right there."

Tyler is a second-generation Italian-American whose grandfather, Giovanni Tallarico, immigrated from Italy in the late 1800's. Musical talent ran rampant through the family. Giovanni and his brothers were all talented, professional musicians. According to Tyler, "They played chamber music all over the eastern United States." Victor, Tyler's father, studied at the Julliard School of music and passed his love of the piano on to his son. Growing up, Steven Tyler found himself always getting into trouble, but music and bands were also part of his teenage years.

One thing was certain: Steven Tyler wanted to be famous. "I was after *total immortality!*" he said once. "I couldn't sleep nights, thinking how famous I could be." It was around that time that Tyler's band, The Stranguers, began to have success. They even land a gig on a Cleveland TV show and later were hired to open for The Byrds. The band changed its name and one day found itself playing in a gig with a band called Jam Band, with Joe Perry and Tom Hamilton. Tyler loved the other band's sound and wanted to merge the two groups.

After a shift in the line-up, Aerosmith emerged from the combined bands. It included Steven Tyler - lead vocals; Joe Perry on lead guitar and backing vocals; Ray Tabano - rhythm guitar; Tom Hamilton on bass; and drummer Joey Kramer. Soon after the band was formed, Brad Whitford replaced Tabano on guitar. That was in 1971; just over one year later, Aerosmith landed its first recording contract. Clive Davis, then president of Columbia Records, saw the group perform one night in New York. Matters Furniss chronicles the moment in his book *Aerosmith - Uncensored on the Record:* "[Davis] simply told the guys, 'Yes, I think we can do something with you.'"

In January of 1973 the band released their debut album, the self-titled *Aerosmith*. The album established the band's hard-rocking, bluesy sound, and though it was rough around the edges (as many debut albums are), it contained something unique. In his review of the album on the website *Allmusic*, Stephen Thomas Erlewine wrote: "...the early masterpiece is, of course, [the song] 'Dream On,' the first full-fledged power ballad. There was nothing quite like it in 1973, and it remains the blueprint for all power ballads since."

Despite its troubles and struggles with drug and alcohol abuse, the band has remained strong. Over the past 40 years, Aerosmith has released 15 studio albums, many live and compilation albums and dozens of singles, including "Walk This Way", "Rag Doll", and "Dude (Looks Looks Like a Lady)". "There are not too many bands out there that are touring all the time that manage to keep the same guys in the band, the same lineup that was there in 1971," guitarist Joe Perry told Melissa Parker of *Smashing Interviews Magazine*. "That takes a lot of work. It's as simple as that."

The Who

Let's get together

The concert was a sell-out. On December 3rd, 1979, fans in Cincinnati were eager to see The Who perform there after a four year absence. That eagerness – along with poor planning including a late sound check – resulted in tragedy: As the frantic crowd rushed into Riverfront Coliseum, 11 people were crushed to death, and eight more were injured. When they found out, the band was devastated. "There's no words to say what I feel," lead singer Roger Daltrey told Cincinnati rock station WEBN. "I'm a parent, as well. I've got a boy of 15, and two little girls. All I can say is: I'm sorry for what's happened."

Rewind twenty years to Acton, London, England. Daltrey had been expelled from high school, found a job in construction, and formed a rock band called The Detours. According to the book *Anyway Anyhow Anywhere: The Complete Chronicle of The Who 1958–1978*, Daltrey spotted John Entwistle by chance on the street carrying a bass and recruited him into the band; shortly after, Entwistle suggested that Pete Townshend join as guitarist for the group. A band by the same name prompted The Detours to change theirs. After some debate, Roger Daltrey settled on The Who.

Keith Moon stepped in as drummer when others just weren't working out. Though the group remained unsigned, they were getting regular gigs. Around this time, two filmmakers made a short promotional film showcasing The Who, and the band gained more and more popularity. An accident at one concert became a Who trademark. Pete Townshend tossed his guitar into the air and it broke after hitting the low ceiling. The audience thought the mishap was a genuine part of the show and went crazy. "A week or so later, at the same venue, I ran out of guitars and toppled the stack of Marshall amplifiers," Townshend said. "Not one to be upstaged, our drummer Keith Moon joined in by kicking over his drumkit." From then on, the instrument-smashing became a staple of The Who's live shows.

At the end of 1965, the album *My Generation* was released; it was considered by the band to be somewhat of a rush job. However, the tracks "My Generation" and "The Kids Are Alright" are two of their most popular songs. In June of 1967, The Who made its first US appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival in California. During a tour in support of Herman's Hermits, Keith Moon discovered the joys of blowing up hotel rooms and public toilets. "[A]ll that porcelain flying through the air was quite unforgettable. I

never realized dynamite was so powerful." Moon says in Tony Fletcher's biography *Dear Boy: The Life of Keith Moon*.

A year later, The Who released the album *Tommy*, a rock opera about the life of a deaf, dumb and blind boy, and his attempt to communicate with others. As *Rolling Stone* stated, the album hit Number Four in the U.S., and its first single, "Pinball Wizard," went to Number 19. Both were a huge success. At Woodstock later that year, The Who performed most of the album. Though Woodstock was an important part of the culture at the time, the band was critical of the concert. After witnessing the crowd's rowdiness and rampant drug use, Pete Townshend said "I thought the whole of America had gone mad."

Tommy secured the band's place in superstardom. The follow-up, *Who's Next*, quickly went to Number One in both the UK and the US. In 1975, *Tommy* was made into a feature film with Roger Daltrey in the title role. The film won the "Best Rock Movie" at the first annual Rock Music Awards.1976 marked the year that The Who played the loudest ever rock concert, a record that would not be broken until the mid -80s.

Keith Moon's self-destructive behavior had become more and more erratic. His abuse of drugs was interfering with his drumming performance. On September 6th, 1978, he attended a party given by Paul and Linda McCartney. He was found the next day in his apartment, dead of a drug overdose. The very next day, Pete Townshend issued a written statement, saying in part "We are more determined than ever to carry on." Carry on, they did. The Cincinnati tragedy 15 months later only seemed to steel that resolve. An article in *Time* magazine stated that The Who had "outpaced, outlasted, outlived and outclassed" all of their rock band contemporaries.

Songs such as "You Better You Bet" led to continuing success. All of of the surviving members released solo albums, successful in their own right. There were breakups, reunions, other breakups and more reunions..In June of 2002, the day before the first date of a full-blown US tour, John Entwistle was found dead of a heart attack at 57 at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas. Cocaine was a contributing factor.

The Who's 2014–15 tour – billed as **The Who Hits 50!**, celebrated the 50th anniversary of the band. The next year, the band went on the **Back to the Who Tour 51!**. Two more tours followed, proving you can't keep The Who down.

America

The air was full of sound

When America released its break-out single "A Horse With No Name" in 1971, listeners mistook it as a Neil Young song. Both were primarily blues-driven folk rock acts, and Young's popularity was soaring at the time, having just released the hit "Heart of Gold," which was sitting comfortably at the top of the charts. But "A Horse With No Name" quickly climbed the charts, knocking "Heart of Gold" from the Number One spot, establishing America as a successful band in its own right.

Despite its name, America wasn't formed in the United States. The three founding members – Dewey Bunnell, Dan Peek, and Gerry Beckley,- were all sons of United States Air Force servicemen stationed in England. The trio met in high school in the 60's and formed the band shortly after graduation. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the band chose the name "America" to "avoid anyone thinking they were Brits trying to sound American." They played gigs in the London area and – as their local popularity grew – their manager, Jeff Dexter, landed them a contract with the UK branch of Warner Bros. Records label.

When America's self-titled debut was released in late December 1971, it was only moderately successful. Following the release, Dewey .Bunnell penned a single originally titled "Desert Song," recalling childhood trips through Arizona and New Mexico. The song was re-titled "A Horse With No Name" and became a No. One hit in several countries, including the U.S. and Canada. The song was included on later releases of America's debut album, which then went Platinum, selling over a million copies.

America went on to make more albums, churning out such hits as "Ventura Highway," "Lonely People" and "Sister Golden Hair." During this time, band member Dan Peek was heavily into drugs and alcohol "I was a spectrum drug abuser, alcoholic, you name it," Peek told *Goldmine* magazine in 2010 discussing his 2004 autobiography, "An American Band: The America Story." After seven years with America, Peek left drugs, alcohol and even the band behind, to become a solo artist with a career that would continue until his death in 2011.

Dewey Bunnell and Gerry Beckley decided to continue on. They remained moderately successful until 1982, when the band hit it big with their tenth studio album *View From the Ground*. They had brought in some high-profile musicians to

work with them on the album, including Carl Wilson (of Beach Boys fame) and Christopher Cross. Another musician, Russ Ballard, wrote and produced a song for the duo that would put them back in the Top Ten: "You Can Do Magic." The website *About Entertainment* produced a list called "Top 10 Soft Rock Songs of the '80s": "You Can Do Magic" made number eight. The site calls the song "a model example of the melodic pleasures and silky smooth production common to [folk rock]."

More albums and more tours followed, with varying degrees of success. In 2000, *Highway: 30 Years of America* – a three-CD box set which included 64 remastered tracks spanning the group's career – was released. Beckley and Bunnell have remained very active, even to this day. America continues to be a folk rock staple.

Chicago

Sing a mean tune, kid

There where grumblings from within the Windy City's mass transportation system in 1969. Seems that a rock band from the area had taken on the same name of the Chicago Transit Authority for their debut album and the CTA was threatening legal action. Rather than be tied up in court, the band relented and shortened its own name to just plain "Chicago".

Two years earlier a group of six college students from Chicago, Illinois got together to form a band called The Big Thing. The Big Thing was a unique blend of instruments. Besides the usual keyboards, guitar and drums, there was a

saxophone, trumpet and trombone. "The band was doing pretty well," guitarist/vocalist Terry Kath said in a 1971 interview. "So we thought we had to have a manager. This guy kept telling us that rock was the big thing, everyone's talking about the big thing, our band was the big thing. So he made us change our name to The Big Thing. Can you believe that?!"

The Big Thing was primarily a cover band, but soon they began working on original material. A friend of saxophonist Walter Parazaider – James William Guercio – became manager of the group and relocated them to Los Angeles. Once in LA, the band became Chicago Transit Authority and gained popularity at local clubs. They soon signed with Columbia Records and recorded their self-titled debut album, released in April of 1969. Though the actual Chicago Transit Authority was not happy with the band's name, the album proved very popular, reaching #17 on the Billboard Pop Albums chart. The band's name was shortened, and Chicago was on its way.

In August of that year, the band began recording their second album. Released in January of 1970, *Chicago* was immensely popular as it reached the number 4 spot on Billboard Pop Albums. It also garnered Chicago three Top Ten hits: "25 or 6 to 4" hit the No. 4 spot on Billboard Pop Singles; "Make Me Smile" went to #9 and "Colour My World" reached #7. In April of that same year, *Chicago* was certified as a Gold Album by the Recording Industry Association of America, meaning it had sold over 500,000 copies in the US alone in just three months.

Chicago has seen many changes in its line-up over the years. Many musicians have left and others have come aboard. But the most shocking was the death of original member and guitarist Terry Kath. In January of 1978, Kath died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. "He was an unhappy individual,"

longtime Chicago trombonist James Pankow said once. "His relationship was not going well. He was also certainly more dependent on chemicals than he should have been. He wasn't addicted to anything, but he was abusing drugs."

Peter Cetera – one of the original members of Chicago – left the band in mid-1985 to launch a successful solo career. He had released a solo album in 1981; it did not do well. Four years later, he was ready to take a little break and work on a second solo album, but Chicago was committed to another tour. So Cetera was faced with a dilemma. "They [the record company] sort of forced my hand," Cetera said in an interview with Ernie Manouse. "They said 'if you don't sign this contract [with Chicago] we'll find somebody else.'"

The band has enjoyed a long and successful career. 25 of Chicago's 32 albums have been certified Platinum They have had 21 singles in the Top Ten, 11 of which have gone to Number One. On July 23rd, 1992, Chicago was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In 2020, the band received a Lifetime Achievement Awards From the Recording Academy.

Supertramp

The bird that sings

Dutch millionaire Stanley August Miesegaes was not satisfied with the rock band he was backing financially. He felt that the band – called The Joint – was not living up to its potential. But Miesegaes did have faith in the talents of the band's keyboardist, Rick Davies. Miesegaes, affectionately known as "Sam", approached Davies with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The millionaire offered to bankroll a new band if Davies wanted to launch a fresh project. Davies

assembled Roger Hodgson (bass and vocals), Richard Palmer (guitars), and Keith Baker (percussion) after placing an advertisement in the British weekly music newspaper, *Melody Maker*. The group, called Daddy, was formed in 1969; almost immediately Baker was replaced by former stage actor Robert Millar. One problem: there was an American band by the name of Daddy Longlegs, so Daddy changed its name to Supertramp, a name taken from the title of a novel.

Rick Davies and Roger Hodgson came from two hugely different walks of life and were unlikely song-writing partners. The website *Guide to Swindon* (Davies' birthplace) goes into detail about the relationship: "...despite their contrasting backgrounds – Rick's working class upbringing and Roger's public school education – they struck up an instant rapport... Though other members came and went over the years, Davies and Hodgson were the core of the group and its driving forces."

Supertramp was among the first bands to sign with the newly-found British branch of A&M Records. Their self-titled debut album drew critical praise, but wasn't popular commercially. Then there were shake-ups. Members came; members left. But the group continued on. Supertramp's second album, *Indelibly Stamped*, was released in June of 1971. In their brief retrospective review, *Allmusic* said that the album "was an improvement over their debut, but still indulged too much in lengthy instrumental sections." The album still failed to bring the group commercial success; however, their stage shows were very energetic. Rick Davies described their stage show at the time as "all Rock and Roll really. We used to get people up on the bloody stage and it was just chaos, hopping away doing about three encores."

In the three years between their second and third albums, there were more changes in the band. Dougie Thomson

(bass), came on board as did Bob Siebenberg (drums & percussion) and John Helliwell (saxophone, backing vocals), completing the line-up. Hodgson would also begin playing keyboards. This lineup of Supertramp would remain in place for the next ten years. However, the Davies-Hodgson bond began weakening: they no longer would work together, but continued to write songs separately. Roger Hodgson once told *Songfacts* "Rick and I, we were very, very different as writers. I think it's good having another writer in the band, because then you have the friendly competition which helps bring out the best in each other, and I think that was the case with the two of us."

The band's third album, *Crime of the Century* finally brought what Supertramp had been seeking: international commercial success. It was a UK Top 10 album and a U.S. Top 40 album, and eventually would go Gold in the U.S. This success pressured the band to release a follow-up as soon as possible. *Crisis? What Crisis?* was the result. Recorded on both sides of the Atlantic, it was met with mixed reviews. *Rolling Stone* magazine was unkind, saying "The biggest crisis is trying to get through both sides of this record." *Allmusic's* Mike DeGagne, however, had another view. "The songwriting is sharp, attentive, and passionate," he says. "[T]he lyrics showcase Supertramp's ease at invoking emotion into their music, which would be taken to even greater heights in albums to come."

April 1977 saw the release of *Even in the Quietest Moments...* It reached number 16 on the Billboard Pop Albums Charts in 1977, and within a few months of release became Supertramp's first Gold (500,000 copies or more) selling album in the U.S. A year later, Supertramp achieved superstardom with *Breakfast in America.* The album charted four U.S. singles, including the title track and "The Logical Song." "The Logical Song" is perhaps Supertramp's best-known song; Hodgson explains how the lyrics came about:

"It's very basically saying that what they teach us in schools is all very fine, but what about what they don't teach us in schools that creates so much confusion in our being."

Though the group had disbanded in 1989, Rick Davies brought Supertramp together again in 1996 and they continue to tour to this day, although sporadically. Hodgson has gone solo and also continues touring.

Electric Light Orchestra

It's like magic

Violins and cellos in a rock band? A fusion of classical music and pop? A unique idea, unheard of in the late 1960s. It was the idea of Roy Woods – guitarist for a British rock group called The Move – to pick up rock music "...where the Beatles left off." Aspiring to be the next Beatles is a lofty ambition, but it was a concept that excited Jeff Lynne, at the time the vocalist for The Idle Race. After a bit of coaxing, Lynne left The Idle Race to join The Move. With Lynne also

producing. The Move's sound changed, evolving into what would become the sound of Electric Light Orchestra, consisting of Woods, Lynne and drummer Bev Beven.

Electric Light Orchestra's self-titled debut took nearly a year to record. During this time, The Move was still releasing singles, but the main focus was on Electric Light Orchestra – or ELO for short. The album was released in the United Kingdom in December 1971, where it spent four weeks at #32 on the UK Album Charts. Prior to the album's United States release, a representative from the group's US label, United Artists, made a phone call to ELO's UK label to find out – among other things – the title of the album. The rep couldn't get through, so jotted down "no answer." In a move straight out of fiction, the US ELO album was titled *No Answer*. Drummer Bev Beven confirmed the story in his book *The Electric Light Orchestra Story*, adding "It was quite a good title, though, wasn't it?"

Because of tensions over management and less than satisfactory tour dates, Roy Woods left the band halfway through the recording of ELO's second album. Now only Lynne and Beven were left, along with Wilfred Gibson on violin, Richard Tandy on keyboards in place of Hunt, Mike de Albuquerque on bass and vocals, and Mike Edwards and Colin Walker on cellos. The second album, *ELO 2*, was released in January of 1973. A third album soon followed, and ELO made its first appearance on "American Bandstand," where they played Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven."

ELO's fourth album, released in the fall of 1974 was a concept album. *Eldorado, A Symphony* told the story (through music) of a man who journeys into fantasy worlds via dreams. It was the first ELO album to go gold in the U.S., selling over 500,000 copies. Nine more studio albums followed. Altogether, ELO's recording career spanned thirty

years, producing such hits as "Evil Woman," "Don't Bring Me Down," and "Mr. Blue Sky" among many others.

The overall line-up has changed over the years, with Jeff Lynne being the only member still with the group. Beven had left in the late eighties. Though there was no official announcement of a breakup, Lynne became involved in projects independent of Electric Light Orchestra. Most notably producing George Harrison's solo album and becoming involved with the successful group The Traveling Wilburys. The first breakup did come in 1988 and lasted over ten years.

Electric Light Orchestra made a comeback in 2000 with the release of a retrospective box set, *Flashback*. There were a couple of television appearances, including *VH1 Storytellers*, and though a planned tour was canceled, interest in ELO was still high. In August of 2010, a DVD collection of ELO's early performances was released. In 2014, the band did reunite for a performance at London's Hyde Park. Fifty thousand tickets sold out in 15 minutes, testimony to ELO's popularity.

Lynyrd Skynyrd

On down the line

When he died in 2010, Leonard Skinner was hailed by The New York Times as "arguably the most influential high school gym teacher in American popular culture." Skinner had been a gym instructor at Robert E. Lee high school in Jacksonville, Florida, where young musicians Ronnie Van Zant, Gary Rossington Larry Junstrom and Bob Burns attended school. Their friend (and future bandmate) Allen Collins, went to another school across town. Skinner strictly enforced the school's policy against long hair on boys: needless to say, he was not popular with Ronnie and the others, who were unconventional, long-haired teens. Years

later, looking for a new name for his rock band, Van Zant decided to pay mocking tribute to Skinner and came up with the name Lynyrd Skynyrd.

Growing up, sports competed with music for the boys' attention. Gary Rossington had aspirations of playing for the New York Yankees baseball team. One of Ronnie's idols was boxer Muhammad Ali, so he toyed with the idea of a boxing career. But in the end, music won out. Actually, a musical career was pretty much preordained for Ronnie Van Zant. According to the article "Skynyrd History Lessons" on the *Official Lynyrd Skynyrd History Website*, Marion Van Zant had this to say about her son: "The first day Ronnie went to school he sat in the corner with a dunce cap on his head for singing `Ricochet Romance' and `Beer Drinkin' Daddy' in the classroom. So, I had to go down to the school house and take Ronnie outside and tend to him a little bit."

The original line-up, then known as the band My Backyard, was formed in 1966. That quickly changed to The Noble Five then to The One Percent as the line-up grew. Ronnie had lead vocals; Gary Rossington and Allen Collins on guitar; Larry Junstrom, bass; Bob Burns, drums. While other young bands squandered their earnings, The One Percent used their earnings to buy better equipment and instruments. They practiced every chance they got. That earned them the bigger gigs. Still, that strict gym teacher was always on their minds. According to the biography *Lynyrd Skynyrd: Remembering the Free Birds of Southern Rock* by Gene Odom, the band was toying with a new name, and one night, Ronnie asked the audience what they thought of the name that was chosen; the response was overwhelmingly positive. That night, Lynyrd Skynyrd was born.

The line-up continued to grow, as did their popularity. The band's most famous song was also one of their first. According to Odom, "Free Bird" began as a question posed

by Allen Collins' girlfriend. Watching him practice his music one day, she asked "If I leave here tomorrow, will you still remember me?" That question stuck with Collins, who eventually wrote a song around it. "Free Bird" has since become an anthem for Skynyrd. Other instantly recognizable tunes followed. "Gimme Three Steps", "Sweet Home Alabama", and "Tuesday's Gone" among them.

Then in October of 1977, horrible tragedy struck. Skynyrd had just released its 5th studio album, *Street Survivors* and "[a]nticipation for the new album was so high that it went gold within days." Sterling Whitaker writes on the website *Ultimate Classic Rock*. "Lynyrd Skynyrd embarked on the most ambitious headlining tour of their career, traveling between concert dates in their own Convair CV-300." The group was just five shows into the tour. En route from Greenville, S.C. to Baton Rouge, La., the plane ran out of fuel and crashed in a swamp in Gillsburg, Mississippi. Six people, including Ronnie Van Zant and three other band members, were killed.

Ten years later, in 1987, Lynyrd Skynyrd reunited for a full-scale tour with five major members of the pre-crash band: crash survivors Gary Rossington, Billy Powell, Leon Wilkeson and Artimus Pyle, along with guitarist Ed King, who had left the band two years before the crash. Ronnie Van Zant's younger brother, Johnny, took over as the new lead singer. The road back has been rough, plagued with tragedy and drama. Allen Collins, paralyzed in an auto accident, died in 1990. Other band members have also passed away. But Lynyrd Skynyrd has kept going. In March 2006, the band was finally inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame in New York.

Gary Rossington is the only original member still with the band. Talking to *Uncut*'s Rob Hughes in 2006, Rossington summed things up neatly. "After all we've been through,

we've gotten stronger over the years. To have Johnny [Van Zant] there now is like having part of Ronnie there. You feel his spirit is onstage with us every night."

John Mellencamp

Mr. Happy Go Lucky

It was 1951; most children born with Spina Bifida – a birth defect that doesn't allow the spine to form properly – did not live long. John Mellencamp was one of three babies born at Riley Hospital for Children in Indiana that had Spina Bifida. A young doctor by the name of Robert Heimburger decided to try something new. "[He] asked my parents, 'Here are your choices: the kid's going to die or else let me do this experimental operation and it might work,'" Mellencamp said in an interview with *Men's Journal* magazine. "So I was the guinea pig. They had to cut my head off basically, I have scar from ear to ear."

John Mellencamp didn't even know about the surgery until he was about ten, when he asked his parents about the scar on his neck. They told him he had an operation as an infant but did not go into detail. Settling into teenage life, he soon developed an interest in music, playing in various bands throughout high school. At the age of 18, he set aside his pursuit of music to elope with his pregnant girlfriend and become a father. Shortly after he birth of daughter Michele, John Mellencamp began attending community college, graduated after two years and soon returned to music. He recorded several demos and eventually moved to New York City to further his career.

He soon found a manager, Tony DeFries, famous for working with David Bowie. With the release of Mellencamp's debut album in 1976, DeFries decided to go with a stage name for the young Indiana native: the artist was now billed as "Johnny Cougar." DeFries claimed that the German name Mellencamp would be too hard to market. "I was totally unaware of it until it showed up on the album jacket," Mellencamp confessed years later in the book *Song: The World's Best Songwriters on Creating the Music that Moves Us*. "When I objected to it, he (DeFries) said, 'Well, either you're going to go for it, or we're not going to put the record out.' So that was what I had to do... but I thought the name was pretty silly." The album was a failure, but that did not stop the young musician.

He recorded a second album, but it was not released until years later, when Mellencamp had achieved stardom. Soon after making that second record, Mellencamp found himself with a new manager. In 1979, his third album, *John Cougar*, yielded his first hit: "I Need A Lover," followed by 1980's *Nothin' Matters and What If It Did*, and two Top Forty singles: "This Time" (No. 27) and "Ain't Even Done With the Night" (No. 17). That was only the beginning.

By the time *American Fool* was released in 1982, the stage name Johnny Cougar had been shortened to John Cougar. The album was a huge success, producing the hits "Hurts So Good," "Jack & Diane," and "Hand to Hold On To." Despite the commercial and critical success of *American Fool*, Mellencamp wasn't too excited. "To be real honest, there's three good songs on that record, and the rest is just sort of filler," he told *Creem Magazine* in 1984. "It was too labored over, too thought about, and it wasn't organic enough. The record company thought it would bomb, but I think the reason it took off was – not that the songs were better than my others – but people liked the sound of it, the 'bam-bam-bam' drums. It was a different sound."

Took off it did, and the artist felt comfortable enough with his success to force Riva – his record company – to add his real last name to the stage name of John Cougar. In 1983, *Uh-huh* was released and the musician was now billed as John Cougar Mellencamp. "Pink Houses" and "Crumblin' Down" as well as the No. 14 hit "Authority Song" were added to his growing list of hits. 1985 brought *Scarecrow*, which had five Top 40 singles: "Lonely Ol' Night" (No. 6), "Small Town" (No. 6), and "R.O.C.K. in the U.S.A." (No. 2), "Rain on the Scarecrow" (No. 21) and "Rumbleseat" (No. 28).

The year 1985 also saw Mellencamp involved in a different project: Farm Aid. The artist got together with fellow musicians Willie Nelson and Neil Young to organize the first Farm Aid concert to raise awareness about the loss of family farms and to raise funds to keep farm families on their land. "We all see what's happening with agriculture, what's happening to our small towns," Mellencamp said. "They are going out of business. That's a direct result of the farm problem." The first Farm Aid concert raised over $9

million for America's family farmers. The shows and fund-raising have been going strong for 30 years now.

More albums and more hit singles followed. In 1989, "Cougar" was finally dropped, and the singer was billed with his given name only: John Mellencamp. He suffered a minor heart attack in 1994, but kept going. A non-musical love is painting, and in 1998, Mellencamp released a book of his early paintings. "He's a creative guy," Paul Zollo said in his 2005 article for *American Songwriter* magazine. "When he's not writing songs and making records, he's often busy painting." An exhibition called *The Paintings of John Mellencamp* came to the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio from November 3, 2013 to January 12, 2014 and was Mellencamp's first major exhibition in an art museum.

Mellencamp's four-decade-long career has covered music, politics, painting, acting, and even writing a musical with Stephen King. "I wrote all the songs, 17 songs... It sounds like the 'Sgt. Pepper' of Americana to me," he said in 2010. His awards are also numerous, including a Grammy and various others. In 2008, he was inducted into
the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But all the fame hasn't really changed him. He has a home not far from outside of Bloomington, Indiana on the shores of Lake Monroe, just 50 miles from the small town he grew up in.

Jimi Hendrix

Brilliant but brief

As with many celebrities who died young – especially sixties and seventies rock icons – the death of Jimi Hendrix is surrounded by controversy. Conflicting or vague statements. Whose is right, and whose is wrong? Was his death planned by someone else? These questions have been debated for years. His death has and will continue to fascinate people. But the circumstances surrounding his death notwithstanding, one thing is certain: Jimi Hendrix was a true rock legend.

Johnny Allen Hendrix was born on November 27, 1942, in Seattle, Washington. Four years later, his father not liking the name "Johnny", Johnny Allen's name was officially changed to James Marshall. Surprisingly, Jimmy's worst subject in school was music, according to Harry Shapiro, in his book *Jimi Hendrix: Electric Gypsy*. One thing that did hold his interest was science fiction, a motif that would later find its way into his songwriting. At fifteen, he got a guitar and everything changed for Jimmy.

Jimmy was heavily influenced by the blues, as is evident in his music. But, though the blues were an influence, he felt no real connection to it. "When I first started playing guitar it was way up in the Northwest, in Seattle, Washington. They don't have too many of the real blues singers up there," Hendrix said in a 1967 interview with Steve Barker. "When I really learned to play was down South. Then I went into the Army for about nine months, but I found a way to get out of that. When I came out I went down South and all the cats down there were playing blues, and this is when I really began to get interested in the scene."

It was while he was playing various gigs in Tennessee in the early sixties, that Jimmy began playing the guitar with his teeth, a move he would eventually be famous for. "... the idea of doing that came to me in a town in Tennessee," he said in a 1969 interview. "Down there you have to play with your teeth or else you get shot. There's a trail of broken teeth all over the stage..." Eventually, he found his way into the recording studio, as a member of the backup band for the Isley Brothers. After two years, he left and began recording and performing with Little Richard.

After several more years of experience as a backup musician with various artists, Jimmy formed his own band: The Blue Flame. The band's various gigs attracted the right people and Jimmy suddenly found himself with a manager. British-born

Chas Chandler took Jimmy under his wing and took him to London, England in late 1966.

There, Chandler changed the spelling of his protégé's first name to "Jimi" and formed a new band – guitarist/vocalist Jimi, bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell – billed as "The Jimi Hendrix Experience."

The first Jimi Hendrix single was a cover of the standard "Hey Joe." A year later, The Jimi Hendrix Experience released their first album, *Are You Experienced.* During the band's extensive tours of the UK and Europe, Jimi developed his masterful, unique stage presence. Antics which included setting his guitar on fire at the end of a performance. The Jimi Hendrix Experience was riding high in England and Europe with such hits as "Purple Haze" and "Foxy Lady." Their north American breakthrough came in a performance at the Monterey International Pop Festival. The Experience released only two more albums before calling it quits in mid 1969.

Hendrix continued performing and recording, but the strain of the music business was taking its toll. Drugs and alcohol were always present, but their use – and abuse – grew as dissatisfaction and depression took a firm hold on Jimi. The exact circumstances surrounding his death on September 18, 1970 may never be agreed upon, but it is known that Jimi Hendrix became unconscious and choked to death on what the attending physician says was red wine. Dr John Bannister stated in an interview: "What he had, was that he had a drowning of the airways. His lungs were completely overcome by fluid."

Jimi Hendrix left behind a musical legacy that is just as powerful today as it was 40 years ago. The Jimi Hendrix Experience, with Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell, were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992.

Rolling Stone magazine named Jimi the greatest guitarist of all time in 2003.

Lou Reed

Hey baby, rock 'n' roll

Everyone, from U2's Bono to Duran Duran, from Elvis Costello to Beck, has claimed to be influenced one way or another by Lou Reed. According to Chris Willman, reporter for *Yahoo News*, Bono jokingly had this to say at a U2 concert: "Every song we've ever written was a rip-off of a Lou Reed song,"

Like many musicians, Lou Reed picked up the guitar early on. Listening to the radio as a teenager, he became hooked on Rock'n'Roll and Rhythm & Blues. While he was in high

school. Reed appeared in several bands, and even cut a single. He once explained his passion for music this way: "My God is rock'n'roll. It's an obscure power that can change your life. The most important part of my religion is to play guitar."

After college, Reed's passion for music led him to become an in-house songwriter for Pickwick Records, a small record company known for budget album releases. It was at Pickwick that the foundation was laid for something that would forever change music. Lou Reed met Welsh musician John Cale, and soon afterward, the punk, blues and rock band The Velvet Underground was born.

The rock group more or less ushered in the punk rock era, with its music focusing on the subcultures of drugs, prostitution and other gritty subject matters. Though The Velvet Underground was, and still is, a very influential group, it was never successful commercially. Lou Reed left the band in late 1970. But music's call remained strong, and little over a year later, he had signed with RCA Records and released his first solo album, simply titled *Lou Reed*. ""His artistic self-awareness is so secure that he invariably turns less into more," Stephen Holden wrote in *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1972.

Over the next forty years, over twenty solo and collaborative albums followed. In 1996, the Velvet Underground were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But as a solo artist, Lou Reed has yet to receive that honor, though he has been nominated twice. Reed's career spanned four decades summed up by Mikal Gilmore of *Rolling Stone* magazine: "Lou Reed doesn't just write about squalid characters, he allows them to leer and breathe in their own voices, and he colors familiar landscapes through their own eyes," he wrote in 1979. "That qualifies him, in my opinion, as one of the few real heroes rock & roll has raised."

In May of 2013, Lou Reed had a liver transplant, and seemed to be recovering. But on October 27th of that year, he passed away. He was 71. Though Lou Reed is gone, his music will be around for a long time to come.

Bob Seger

Still the same

It was pretty evident early on that Robert Clark Seger would lead a music-filled life. "I picked up on instruments watching [my father] play – the clarinet was his favorite because he loved Benny Goodman," Bob Seger said in 2004, "but he played the guitar and the piano, sang in a barbershop quartet. So music was around the house a lot... By 10 I was playing my dad's bass ukulele, this large ukulele, and already singing Elvis Presley songs, Buddy Holly songs, and teaching myself chords from a book he gave me."

Bob Seger's father abandoned his wife and two sons shortly thereafter. The family struggled financially, with young Bob working three jobs. Even during these hard times, Seger managed to form a band, play gigs and even record a few songs. "I'll never forget the first applause we ever got playing the junior prom," Seger told journalist Timothy White in 1986, "it literally changed my life."

Over the next several years, different bands came and went, and Seger was a relative unknown outside his home state of Michigan. Though he performed constantly, nationwide success eluded him. In 1968, Seger and his then-current band, The Last Heard, signed with Capitol Records. Capitol promptly changed the band's name to The Bob Seger System. The System's single "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man" went to #17 on the U.S. charts, but – though it was a major hit in Detroit – the song failed to bring stardom.

The band's follow-up to "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man" was not well-received; The Bob Seger System soon dissolved and Seger left Capitol Records. Another string of bands followed over the next six years. The loneliness of a singer's touring life led Seger to pen "Turn The Page"; he wrote it in 1972 while touring with rock duo Teegarden & Van Winkle. "Turn The Page" would not become a hit until years later, after Seger founded his iconic Silver Bullet Band.

Drummer Charlie Martin tells the story about how the band got its name: "It was just the 'Bob Seger Band' through most of '74. Somebody made a comment about Bob Seger being like the Lone Ranger. And the Lone Ranger had the silver bullets. And somehow that became 'Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band.'" Other members were guitarist Drew Abbott, keyboard-player Robyn Robbins, bassist Chris Campbell, and saxophone player Alto Reed. Seger and co.

returned to Capitol Records to release *Beautiful Loser*, which contained the breakout hit "Katmandu."

Over the years, Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band put out many hits: "Against The Wind", "Night Moves", "Main Street" and "We've Got Tonight" among others. Seger's classic "Old Time Rock'n'Roll" is #278 on the list "Songs of the Century," as compiled by the Recording Industry of America and the National Endowment for the Arts.

In 2012, along with Jim Steinman and Gordon Lightfoot, Seger was inducted into Songwriters Hall of Fame. He continued to tour for another six years. Then, in November of 2018, he embarked on his final tour. One year later in Philadelphia, his 50-year career wound to a close at the Wells Fargo Center. "This is kind of strange...I didn't want to think about this. I love my band. I love my crew," Seger said. "I'm the luckiest man in the world."

The Runaways

Get down ladies, you've got nothin' to lose.

From the beginning, The Runaways had to rise above stereotypical views of what a rock group is and what it isn't. An all-girl rock band? Unheard of in the mid-70s when they formed. And none of these girls were out of their teens. The oldest member was guitarist Lita Ford at seventeen. The perception in the musical world was that a teenage girl band couldn't rock. The Runaways dispelled that myth, all the while struggling with the sometimes overwhelming world of rock'n'roll.

In the mid-seventies, colorful record producer Kim Fowley had the idea to form an all-girl rock band. Teenage guitarist Joan Jett and 15 year old drummer Sandy West expressed the same desire when they met him in 1975. Bassist Micki Steele – later a member of The Bangles – joined Jett and West and the power trio played the party and club circuit around Los Angeles. Soon after, lead guitarist Lita Ford was added. "The very first phone conversation I had with Kim Fowley, he pumped me up so much," Ford says in the documentary *Edgeplay: A Film About The Runaways*. "'We're gonna make lots of money and tour the world.' Who could resist?"

After a few lineup changes, the group was signed to Mercury Records in 1976. The group soon released it's first record, *The Runaways*, which was praised by the website *Allmusic.com*. The website compared the band's music to material by Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith and Guns N' Roses, citing The Runaways' bold approach. "With this album, the Runaways made it crystal clear that women (or specifically, adolescent girls) were more than capable of playing intense, forceful hard rock that went directly for the jugular. Lusty classics like 'Cherry Bomb' and 'You Drive Me Wild' made no attempt to conceal the fact that teenage girls could be every bit as sexual as the guys...."

A year later, with the release of their second album – *Queens of Noise* – The Runaways embarked on their first world tour. They were also unprepared for the super-stardom they had attained in Japan. In that country, The Runaways were number 4 behind ABBA, Kiss and Led Zeppelin in terms of album sales and popularity. The mass hysteria and onslaught of fans that greeted them at the airport was later described by guitarist Jett as being "like Beatlemania." While in Japan, The Runaways did numerous television appearances and released the live album *Live in Japan*.

The Runaways released just two more albums before their career ended. *Waitin' for the Night* saw Joan Jett taking over vocals as lead singer Cherie Currie left to pursue a solo career. During that time, they also parted ways with their first manager, Kim Fowley. Fowley and others have been accused of mismanagement of the band and other wild behavior. "I'm the psycho Svengali," he admitted in an interview. "But I was just trying to make a living." *And Now... The Runaways* was released a year later. Shortly thereafter, the band called it quits.

Differences in the direction The Runaways were to take musically was just one of the reasons the band broke up. Despite the problems that they faced, The Runaways left a permanent mark on the music scene of the mid-to late seventies. "The Runaways were rebels, all of us were," former lead singer Cherie Currie said in a 2001 book. "And a lot of people looked up to us. It helped a lot of kids who had very mediocre, uneventful, unhappy lives. It gave them something to hold on to."

U2

It's a beautiful day

On Saint Patrick's Day in 1978, a talent show in Limerick, Ireland was responsible for launching the career of one of the most popular bands in rock music history. U2 won that show, and not only took home £500 (roughly $790), but also won the chance to make a demo record. Not bad for a group of high school boys. "We couldn't believe it," David Evans (The Edge) once said about the win. "I was completely

shocked. We weren't of an age to go out partying as such but I don't think anyone slept that night...."

Drummer Larry Mullen, Jr. founded the band in 1976. Feedback – as the band was called then – was quite different from the group the world is now familiar with. Originally consisting of seven members – Mullen, Evans and Evans' older brother Dik, Adam Clayton, Ivan McCormick, Peter Martin, and Paul "Bono" Hewson – the band's sound was predominately "punk." In fact, some of their early influences were punk acts such as The Sex Pistols, The Clash and others.

Within weeks, McCormick and Martin were gone. A year later the band's name was changed to The Hype; in early 1978 – because of his commitment to college – Dik Evans walked away. The four remaining members continued on and soon entered the talent competition that was to change their lives forever. The punk influence can be seen and heard in early footage and recordings. "We grew out of the whole 'punk' ideal," Evans said in 1987, "which was 'anyone can get together and write a bunch of songs and go out there and do it.' We did."

Eight weeks after winning the contest and recording their demo, U2 found a manager, Paul McGuinness. "One of the first things that Paul did as our manager was to get us served alcohol.," Bono said semi-jokingly on a VH1 documentary. The group's music became less punk-flavored, closer to mainstream pop, as they struggled to find an audience. "A lot of punks reject us," Bono explained of Dublin audiences in a 1979 interview, "and of course, as it is here, a lot of the hippies reject us because we're new, so we have this peculiar audience, this cross-section. That's why the name U2 is ambiguous, it's in between, like a tightrope we're treading."

With a manager behind them, the band was on its way with the limited (Ireland-only) release of an EP entitled *Three*, but the really were not well-known outside Ireland. That slowly changed. In March of 1980, U2 signed a recording contract with Island Records; October of that same year saw the debut of the group's first album, *Boy*. Two months later, the band made its American debut, at The Ritz in New York City. *Boy* was a success, on both sides of the ocean.

U2 has gone on to release an extensive discography, which includes over a dozen studio albums, live albums and compilation albums including one of the greatest albums of the 80's: *The Joshua Tree*.. Their numerous awards include 22 Grammys and two People's Choice Awards. In all, U2 has won over 80 awards. Bassist Adam Clayton summed up their success saying, "I think succeeding on our own and not playing the showbiz game – which seems to happen to a lot of people who start out with good intentions but those intentions get watered-down – U2 has retained that basic drive and I think that's what's good about us."

Bad Company

Rock Steady

The talent that Bad Company brought to the table when it formed in 1973 was unmistakable. Bad Company is considered a "supergroup" because it consisted of four veteran musicians: two former members of Free, singer Paul Rodgers and drummer Simon Kirke; former Mott the Hoople guitarist Mick Ralphs; and ex-King Crimson bassist Boz Burrell. The name of the group came from a childhood memory of Rodgers'. "I saw a book on Victorian morals. They showed this picture of this Victorian punk," he said. "And you've got this little choirboy kind of guy – a little kid,

actually – looking up to him. And underneath it said, 'Beware of bad company.'"

Peter Grant, manager of Led Zeppelin, took an interest in Bad Company; he had started a new record label, Swan Song, and was looking for new artists to sign. Led Zeppelin had rented studio recording time for a new album but were delayed. "Peter Grant said to me, 'That studio time is available. You can go in there and use Ronnie Lane's mobile and this old mansion to record whatever you can record.'" Paul Rodgers said in an interview with Matt Wardlaw. "We steamed in there and recorded everything that we had at that point — in fact, we recorded that [whole] album."

That album – their self-titled debut – went on to be certified five times platinum by the RIAA. It also gave Bad Company something that bands rarely have: a theme song appropriately titled "Bad Company."

Bad Company's second album, *Straight Shooter*, continued their success. Though it received mixed reviews. Some critics argued that it was better than its predecessor; some argued that it was worse. Nevertheless, songs from the album remain staples of classic rock radio stations everywhere.

The next six years proved to be an up-and-down roller coaster ride for Bad Company. In the studio, they had successes (*Run With the Pack*) as well as failures (*Rough Diamonds*). Due to health reasons (diabetes among them) and conflicts in his personal life, Peter Grant lost interest in managing the band. "Peter was definitely the glue which held us all together and in his absence we came apart," drummer Simon Kirke once said.

Roughly ten years after it formed, the band broke up. Three years later, Bad Company re-grouped, with a huge line-up

change that included Brian Howe as lead vocalist, replacing Paul Rodgers. While the band enjoyed commercial and critical success (*Dangerous Age, Holy Water*), there was plenty of discord in the band. "Leaving Bad Company was not a difficult decision, it had got to the point where nobody was contributing anything to songwriting and quite frankly the band was getting very very sloppy live," Howe told MelodicRock.com. Howe died May 6, 2020, aged 66.

Despite comings and goings (Paul Rodgers returned in 1998), Bad Company remains popular among classic music lovers. In 2013, they teamed up with Lynyrd Skynyrd for a joint 40th Anniversary Tour. On Bad Company's latest tour (2019), the band shared the stage with such acts as ZZ Top, Cheap Trick and (once again) Lynyrd Skynyrd.

The Doors

Riders on the storm

On July 7th, 1971, James Douglas Morrison was laid to rest in Division 6 of Père Lachaise cemetery. The headstone is inscribed with a Greek saying, oft translated as "True to his own spirit." Jim Morrison certainly did live by his own rules, and both he and the band he fronted – The Doors – were influential to the counter-culture of the 1960s and early '70s. The group consisted of Morrison on vocals, keyboardist Ray Manzarek, guitarist Robby Krieger, and drummer John Densmore.

The title of a book by Aldous Huxley was the inspiration for the band's name when they formed in July of 1965. Morrison was a film student at UCLA when he read *The Doors of Perception*. Huxley's chronicle of his experiences under the influence of mescaline, a psychedelic drug. As the band was slowly taking shape, Jim mentioned the book to Ray Manzarek. Two years later – in an interview with *Newsweek* magazine – Manzarek explained the significance of the name: "There are things you know about, and things you don't, the known and the unknown, and in between are the doors – that's us."

The Doors' self-titled debut album was released on January 4th, 1967. The album contained perhaps their most famous song: "Light My Fire." Five months after the song's release, "Light My Fire" was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America for exceeding one million units shipped. Around this time, The Doors appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, slated to perform "Light My Fire." Executives requested all drug references be removed, but Morrison sung the song as it was originally written. Further appearances on the show were canceled.

The second album was released on September 24th of that year. Though *Strange Days* was a commercial success, it had to compete with its predecessor, which still resided in the Top Ten. Though *Strange Days* hit no. 3 on US *Billboard* 200, it quickly slid.

In December of '67, Jim Morrison claimed the distinction of being the first rock artist to be arrested onstage during a concert performance. According to Steve Huey at Allmusic, Morrison took the stage in New Haven, Connecticut, angrily baiting the police officers there; he was arrested on obscenity charges, of which he was later acquitted.

Morrison's increasing dependence on alcohol caused much tension in the studio, and *Waiting for the Sun*, the third album, did not come easy. It was released July 3rd, 1968. Doors concerts were rowdy affairs, with Morrison frequently provoking audiences to riot. Then, in September of that year, The Doors flew overseas for their first-ever tour of Europe. At a show in Amsterdam, a drugged-out Morrison collapsed onstage and was rushed to the hospital, where he spent the night under observation.

A March, 1969 incident marked what author Rich Weidman calls "the beginning of the end for The Doors" in his book *The Doors FAQ: All That's Left to Know About the Kings of Acid Rock*. Morrison was drunk and arrived at the Miami concert over an hour late; from the stage, he antagonized both the police and the audience. The concert quickly devolved into a very bizarre scene, prompting the Dade County Sheriff's office to issue a warrant for Morrison's arrest.

Even though Morrison and The Doors released four more albums (including a live album), things were crumbling. Recording for the third album – *The Soft Parade* – dragged on for months because Morrison's alcoholism made him difficult and unreliable. Production of album number four – *Morrison Hotel* – was marred by the fact that Morrison once again was in trouble with the law. Public drunkenness on an intercontinental airline flight. The charges were dropped, however.

Morrison Hotel did very well, reaching no. 4 on US *Billboard* 200. The follow-up, a live album entitled *Absolutely Live*, did not sell well, and reviews were not favorable. *L.A. Woman* – Jim Morrison's final album with The Doors – came out on April 19, 1971, spawning two of The Doors most notable songs: "Riders on the Storm" and

"Love Her Madly." Jim Morrison was not to enjoy their success.

After recording *L.A. Woman*, Morrison removed himself to Paris, France to live with his companion, Pamela Susan Courson. On July 3rd, 1971, Jim Morrison was found dead in a bathtub in the apartment he had shared with Courson. The only cause of death was listed as "heart failure. To this day, mystery surrounds his death.

The group continued on as a trio, releasing two more albums before disbanding in 1973. On January 12, 1993, The Doors were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

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"Music is a language that doesn't speak in particular words. It speaks in emotions, and if it's in the bones, it's in the bones." — Keith Richards

From The Rolling Stones to The Doors.

A brief foray into the lives of the music makers that move us. A collection of 25 essays written by someone who loves music as much as he does writing. The essays were originally written for a now-defunct internet news website; they were re-written and collected in this book in the hopes that they would bring a little happiness to music lovers everywhere.

Jim has always loved writing. For two years, he wrote for a news website, where he explored Classic Rock and the music that influenced it. Jim says the picture is an old one; he looks the same, but his hair is grayer.

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